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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION - PRESIDENT BUSH'S TRAVEL TO LATIN AMERICA

On February 27, conservative, independent "La Tercera" (circ. 101,000) carried an editorial entitled "Bush in Latin America: A Positive Signal." Quotes:

"President Bush's tour to Latin America...shows Washington's renewed interest in the region and an effort to reverse a loss of influence.... Its effort underscores Washington's commitment with the region.... This change in priorities can be explained by the growing influence and open anti-U.S. governments in Latin America, such as Hugo Chavez'...who has extended alliances beyond the region, particulQly with Iran. That is why it is important on this tour that the U.S. President gives backing to those countries that can counter that influence.

Bush will visit old partners, such as President Alvaro Uribe in Colombia...and new allies, such as Uruguayan President Tabare Vazquez...showing that Washington wants to strengthen ties with countries that promote economic freedom and democratic values. There is no doubt that one of the key stops will be Brazil, because of the role it can play in containing the influence of governments that are viciously anti-U.S.... The U.S. President's visit is a good sign of Washington's renewed interest in the region. A positive relationship between Brazil and the United States is not only good for both, but also benefits Latin America.... In foreign affairs, signals are important and with his visit President Bush is setting the scene to improve relations with the region. Hopefully the visit yields results, because Latin America needs to maintain steady ties with Washington."

KELLY